

LADY GERALDINES COURTSHIP

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1885

BY
ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING







Mrs Lunsell -

With the love of R. E. H.

Dec 25th / 1886 -

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BY
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

ILLUSTRATED BY W. J. HENNESSY

ENGRAVED BY W. J. LINTON



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DESIGNED BY W. J. HENNESSY—ENGRAVED BY W. J. LINTON

	PAGE
<i>PORTRAIT OF MRS. BROWNING</i>	<i>Title</i>
<i>LADY GERALDINE</i>	1
HALLS AMONG THE WOODLANDS	2
MANY VASSALS BOW BEFORE HER	4
SHE HAS BLESSED THEIR LITTLE CHILDREN	5
I GREW SCORNFULLER, GREW COLDER, AS I STOOD UP THERE	
AMONG THEM	9
SLOWLY ROUND SHE SWEPT HER EYELIDS	10
THE BLESSED WOODS OF SUSSEX	13
IN THAT ANCIENT HALL OF WYCOMBE THRONGED THE NUMEROUS	
GUESTS INVITED	15
THE DEER HALF IN THE GLIMMER	17
WENT A-WANDERING UP THE GARDENS THROUGH THE LAURELS	
AND ABELES	19
AS SHE TURNED HER FACE IN GOING	20
THROUGH RIGHT NOBLENES GROW HUMBLE	23
NEAR THE STATUE'S WHITE REPOSING—AND BOTH BATHED IN	
SUNNY AIR	27
JUST TO FEED THE SWANS	28
OR AT TIMES I READ THERE	30

	PAGE
SHE WOULD BREAK OUT, ON A SUDDEN, IN A GUSH OF WOODLAND	
SINGING	33
THE LITTLE CHILDREN FROM THE SCHOOLS	35
WITH A BROAD CLOWN'S BACK TURNED BROADLY TO THE GLORY	
OF THE STARS	37
MAJESTICAL WHITE HORSES	39
FOR I HAD BEEN READING CAMOËNS—THAT POEM YOU REMEMBER	43
FOND OF ART AND LETTERS, TOO	45
NAY, INDEED, MY LORD, THIS TALK IS VAIN	47
THERE I MADDENED! HER WORDS STUNG ME! LIFE SWEEPED THROUGH	
ME INTO FEVER	49
SHE HALF AROSE	51
AND I SPAKE OUT WILDLY, FIERCELY, BRUTAL TRUTHS OF HER	
AND OTHERS	53
WITH WHOM FIRST AND LAST ARE EQUAL	55
COULD YOU GUESS WHAT WORD SHE UTTERED? SHE LOOKED UP,	
AS IF IN WONDER	59
'T WAS MY STRENGTH OF PASSION SLEW ME!—FELL BEFORE HER	
LIKE A STONE	63
<i>TAIL-PIECE</i>	66
<i>HEAD-PIECE TO CONCLUSION</i>	67
'TWIXT THE PURPLE LATTICE-CURTAINS HOW SHE STANDETH STILL	
AND PALE	69
'TIS THE VISION ONLY SPEAKS	73
<i>TAIL-PIECE</i>	74



LADY GERALDINE

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend. Place—A room in Wycombe Hall.

Time—Late in the evening.

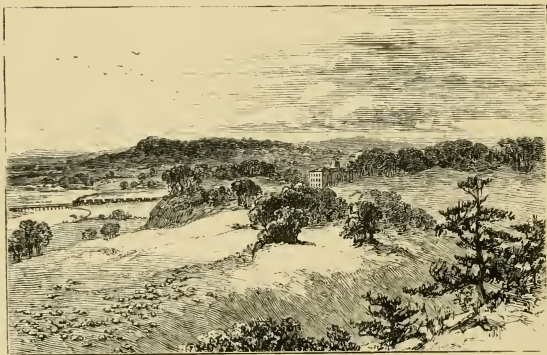
DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean
my spirit o'er you ;

Down the purple of this chamber, tears should
scarcely run at will :

I am humbled who was humble ! Friend, — I
bow my head before you !

You should lead me to my peasants !— but their
faces are too still.

There's a lady — an earl's daughter; she is proud
and she is noble;
And she treads the crimson carpet, and she
breathes the perfumed air;
And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely
eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is soft-
ened in her hair.



She has halls among the woodlands, she has
castles by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can
threaten and command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam
across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the
measure of her land.

There are none of England's daughters who can
show a prouder presence;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked
in her disdain:
She was sprung of English nobles, I was born
of English peasants;
What was *I* that I should love her—save for
competence to pain!

- I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her
casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought
of other things.
O, she walked so high above me, she appeared
to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad
in wings!



Many vassals bow before her as her carriage
sweeps their door-ways ;



She has blessed their little children, — as a
priest or queen were she.

Far too tender or too cruel far, her smile upon
the poor was,

For I thought it was the same smile which she
used to smile on me.

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers
in the palace —

And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels
half as fine :

Oft the prince has named her beauty, 'twixt the
red wine and the chalice :

O, and what was *I* to love her? my Beloved,
my Geraldine!

Yet I could not choose but love her — I was
born to poet uses —

To love all things set above me, all of good
and all of fair :

Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont
to call the Muses —

And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from
mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the
people praised me,
With their critical deduction for the modern
writer's fault;
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the
courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale
spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence:—“Will
your book appear this summer?”
Then returning to each other—“Yes, our plans
are for the moors;”
Then with whisper dropped behind me—“There
he is! the latest comer!
O, she only likes his verses! what is over, she
endures.

“Quite low born! self-educated! somewhat gifted
though by nature,—
And we make a point of asking him,—of being
very kind;
You may speak, he does not hear you; and
besides, he writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers, leave their
natural sting behind.”

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up
there among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold
scorning scorched my brow;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced,
overrung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner
nature through.



I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among them.

I looked upward and beheld her! With a calm
and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said
clear before them all —
“Have you such superfluous honor, sir, that able
to confer it
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest
to Wycombe Hall?”



Here she paused, — she had been paler at the
first word of her speaking ;

But because a silence followed it, blushed some-
what, as for shame ;

Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed
calmly — “ I am seeking

More distinction than these gentlemen think
worthy of my claim.

“ Ne’ertheless, you see, I seek it — not because
I am a woman ”

(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so,
overflowed her mouth),

“ But because my woods in Sussex have some
purple shades at gloaming

Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in
his youth.

"I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no scene for
worldly speeches —

Sir, I scarce should dare — but only where God
asked the thrushes first —

And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert
of my beeches,

I will thank you for the woodlands, ... for the
human world at worst."

Then she smiled around right childly, then she
gazed around right queenly;

And I bowed — I could not answer! Alternated
light and gloom —

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady
eye serenely,

She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out
stately from the room.



O, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them
still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling
up the wind!
O, the curséd woods of Sussex! where the
hunter's arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made
me mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the
 numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors
 with gliding feet;
And their voices low with fashion, not with
 feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows, with elastic
 laughters sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their light
 out on the terrace,
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with
 gradual shadow sweep;
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning
 by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings
 at music in their sleep.



In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the numerous guests invited.

And there evermore was music, both of instru-
ment and singing;
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless
in the dark;
But the cedars stood up motionless each in a
moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the
hollows of the park.



And though sometimes she would bind me with
her silver-corded speeches,
To commix my words and laughter with the
converse and the jest,
Oft I sat apart, and gazing on the river through
the beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her
pure voice o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed,
and laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we
lost them in the hills;
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors
left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the
laurels and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass —
bareheaded — with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to
her throat;
With the golden ringlets in her neck just
quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and
doubting if to float, —

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right
hand held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt
her and the skies,
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew
me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid
in her eyes.



Went a wandering up the gardens through the laurels and abeles.



For her eyes alone smile constantly: her lips
have serious sweetness,
And her front is calm — the dimple rarely
ripples on the cheek:
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, — as
if they in discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not
care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across
into the garden :

And I walked among her noble friends and
could not keep behind ;

Spake she unto all and unto me — “ Behold I
am the warden

Of the song birds in these lindens, which are
cages to their mind.

“ But within this swarded circle, into which the
lime-walk brings us —

Whence the beeches rounded greenly, stand
away in reverent fear ;

I will let no music enter, saving what the
fountain sings us,

Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure
enough to hear.

“The live air that waves the lilies waves this
slender jet of water

Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul
of fasting saint!

Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping! (Lough
the sculptor wrought her,)

So asleep she is forgetting to say *Hush!*—a
fancy quaint

“Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a
dream between them lingers!

And the left hand's index droppeth from the
lips upon the cheek:

And the right hand,—with the symbol rose held
slack within the fingers,

Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this
Silence will not speak!

“That the essential meaning growing may exceed
the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it: it applies more
high and low.
Our true noblemen will often through right
nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honor by denying outward
show.”



"Nay, your Silence," said I, "truly holds her
symbol rose but slackly,

Yet *she holds it* — or would scarcely be a Silence
to our ken!

And your nobles wear their ermine on the out-
side, or walk blackly

In the presence of the social law as most
ignoble men.

"Let the poets dream such dreaming! Madam,
in these British islands,

'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the
symbol that exceeds;

Soon we shall have nought but symbol! and
for statues like this Silence,

Shall accept the rose's image — in another case,
the weed's."

“Not so quickly!” she retorted,—“I confess
where’er you go, you
Find for things, names — shows for actions, and
pure gold for honor clear;
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I
will throw you
The world’s book which now reads dryly, and
sit down with Silence here.”

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and
half in indignation;
Friends who listened laughed her words off while
her lovers deemed her fair.
A fair woman — flushed with feeling, in her
noble-lighted station
Near the statue’s white reposing — and both
bathed in sunny air!

With the trees round, not so distant but you
 heard their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in
 and outward move;
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-
 heart to be warmer,
And recoiling in a tremble from the too much
 light above.

'Tis a picture for remembrance! and thus,
 morning after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to
 her feet —
Why, her greyhound followed also! dogs — we
 both were dogs for scorning —
To be sent back when she pleased it and her
 path lay through the wheat.



Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air!



And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows
and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-
days passed along;
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see
the fawns to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet
Tuscan in a song.

Aye, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sat
down in the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow
cast before ;
And the river running under ; and across it from
the rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt
the air it bore —

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud
the poems
Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more
various of our own ;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser — or the
subtle interflowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets — here's the book
— the leaf is folded down ! —

Or at times a modern volume, — Wordsworth's
solemn-thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad verse, or Tennyson's enchanted
reverie, —
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which,
if cut deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined
humanity.



Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new
poem of my making —

Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to
their worth,

For the echo in you breaks upon the words
which you are speaking,

And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate through
which you drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the
silence round us flinging

A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with
beatings at the breast,

She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of
woodland singing,

Like a child's emotion in a god — a naiad tired
of rest.

O, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know
which is divinest —

For her looks sing too — she modulates her
gestures on the tune;

And her mouth stirs with the song, like song;
and when the notes are finest,

'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem
to swell them on.

Then we talked — O, how we talked! her voice
so cadenced in the talking,

Made another singing — of the soul! a music
without bars —

While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming
round where we were walking,

Brought interposition worthy-sweet — as skies
about the stars.



She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of woodland singing.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as
if she always thought them —

And had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird
on branch

Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way
besought them,

In the birchen wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow
in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth — and
often she speaks lightly,

Has a grace in being gay, which even mourn-
ful souls approve,

For the root of some grave earnest thought is
understruck so rightly,

As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers
above.

And she talked on — *we* talked, rather! upon all
things — substance — shadow —
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses — of the
reapers in the corn —
Of the little children from the schools, seen
winding through the meadow—
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept
poorer by its scorn.



So of men, and so of letters — books are men
of higher stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future
times to hear:
So of mankind in the abstract, which grows
slowly into nature,
Yet will lift the cry of “progress,” as it trod
from sphere to sphere.

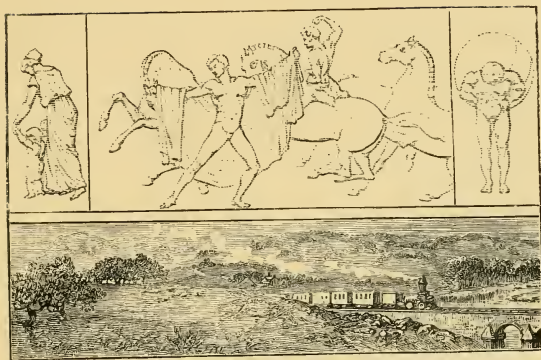
And her custom was to praise me when I said,
“The Age culls simples,
With a broad clown’s back turned broadly to
the glory of the stars —
We are gods by our own reck’ning, and may
well shut up the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the
thunder of our cars



With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars.

“For we throw out acclamations of self-thank-
ing, self-admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—‘O the
wondrous, wondrous age.’
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly
as our iron,
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of
pilgrimage.

“Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature’s
deep resources,
But the child’s most gradual learning to walk
upright without bane?
When we drive out, from the cloud of steam,
majestical white horses,
Are we greater than the first men who led black
ones by the mane?



“If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck
the stars in rising,
If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot
electric breath,
'Twere but power within our *tether*—no new
spirit-power comprising;
And in life we were not greater men, nor
bolder men in death.”

She was patient with my talking; and I loved
her—loved her certes,

As I loved all Heavenly objects, with uplifted
eyes and hands!

As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces,
loved the virtues,

In a Love content with writing his own name
on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so purely!—thought no
idiot Hope was raising

Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent
Love that sat alone—

Out, alas! the stag is like me—he, that tries to
go on grazing

With the great deep gun-wound in his neck,
then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand
 had many suitors;
But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus
 did the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness, that they
 cannot press their futures
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly
 enslaves.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the
 inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant
 thought serene —
For I had been reading Camoëns — that poem
 you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the
 sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew
from it, taking from it

A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its
own,

As the branch of a green osier, when a child
would overcome it,

Springs up freely from his clasping and goes
swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur—it grew deep
as it grew longer—

Speakers using earnest language—"Lady Ger-
aldine, you *would!*"

And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in
accents stronger

As a sense of reason gave it power to make its
rhetoric good.



For I had been reading Camoëns — that poem you remember.

Well I knew that voice — it was an earl's, of
soul that matched his station —
Soul completed into lordship — might and right
read on his brow:
Very finely courteous — far too proud to doubt
his domination
Of the common people, — he atones for grandeur
by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue
eyes, of less expression
Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of
other men,
As steel, arrows, — unelastic lips, which seem to
taste possession,
And be cautious lest the common air should
injure or distract.



For the rest, accomplished, upright,—aye, and
standing by his order
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of art and
letters too;
Just a good man made a proud man,—as the
sandy rocks that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant
ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice — I heard it — and I
could not help the hearkening:

In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning
heart within

Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they
ran on all sides darkening,

And scorched, weighed, like melted metal round
my feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's
sake — for wealth, position,

For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions
to be done —

And she interrupted gently, "Nay, my lord, the
old tradition

Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than
mine is, should be won."



“Ah, that white hand,” he said quickly,—and
in his he either drew it
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance
she replied—
“Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we
had best eschew it,
And pass on, like friends, to other points less
easy to decide.”

What he said again, I know not. It is likely
that his trouble

Worked his pride up to the surface, for she
answered in slow scorn —

“And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I
marry, shall be noble,

Aye, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think
how he was born.”

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life
swept through me into fever,

And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang, full-
statured in an hour:

Know you what it is when anguish, with apoc-
alyptic NEVER,

To a Pythian height dilates you, — and despair
sublimes to power?



*There, I mada-ned! her words stung me! Life swept through me into
fever*

From my brain, the soul-wings budded! — waved
a flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes: I felt self-
drawn out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures; and I saw the
skies grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew
what spirits can.

I was mad — inspired — say either! anguish
worketh inspiration!
Was a man, or beast — perhaps so; for the tiger
roars, when speared;
And I walked on, step by step, along the level
of my passion —
O my soul! and passed the doorway to her face,
and never feared.



He had left her, — peradventure, when my foot-
step proved my coming —

But for *her* — she half arose, then sat — grew
scarlet and grew pale :

O, she trembled ! — 'tis so always with a worldly
man or woman

In the presence of true spirits — what else *can*
they do but quail ?

O, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its
forest-brothers

Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed
her face upon her hands —

And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths
of her and others!

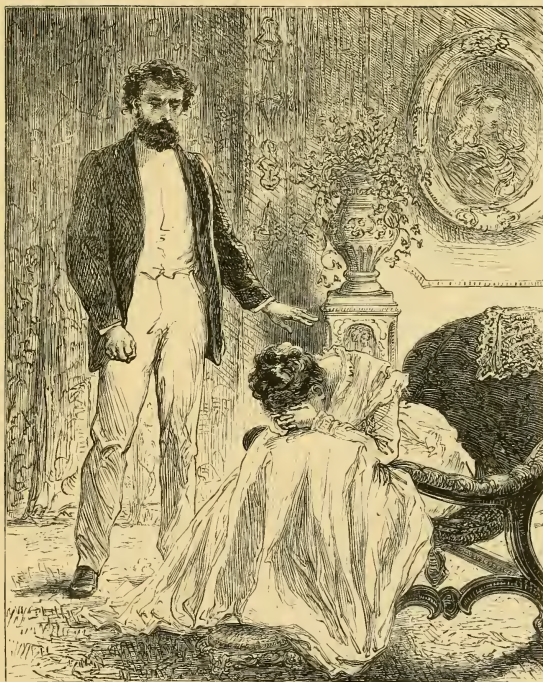
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, wind-
like, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted
though leaf-verdant,

Trod them down with words of shaming, — all
the purple and the gold,

All the “landed stakes” and lordships — all that
spirits pure and ardent

Are cast out of love and honor because chancing
not to hold.



And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others !

“For myself I do not argue,” said I, “though I
love you, madam ;
But for better souls that nearer to the height
of yours have trod.
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more
infidels to Adam,
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to
God.

“Yet, O God,” I said, “O grave,” I said, “O
mother’s heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and
corpse and little child !
We are fools to your deductions, in these fig-
ments of heart-closing !
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympa-
thies defiled !



“ Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank
or wealth — *that* needs no learning;

That comes quickly — quick as sin does, aye, and
culminates to sin;

But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a
clay above your scorning,

With God's image stamped upon it and God's
kindling breath within.

“What right have you, madam, gazing in your
palace mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others
must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your
fingers, to vow gaily
You will wed no man that’s only good to God,
—and nothing more?

“Why, what right have you, made fair by that
same God — the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned — with your
lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish if its
smile were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning
common words to grace,

“What right *can* you have, God’s other works
to scorn, despise, revile them

In the gross, as mere men, broadly — not as
noble men, forsooth, —

As mere Pariahs of the outer world, forbidden to
assoil them

In the hope of living, dying, near that sweet-
ness of your mouth?

“Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit
were less earthly,

If its instrument were gifted with a better silver
string,

I would kneel down where I stand, and say —

Behold me! I am worthy

Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am worthy as
a king.

“As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall
feel this stain upon her—
That I, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned
by me and you again,
Love you, madam—dare to love you—to my
grief and your dishonor—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent
disdain!”

More mad words like these—more madness
friend, I need not write them fuller;
And I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines
in showers of tears—
O, a woman! friend, a woman! Why, a beast
had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the
shining of the spheres.



Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked up, as if in wonder.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all
vibrating with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence drew
her face up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered? She
looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said
“Bertram!” It was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have
—or if even, with queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she had risen
up and said,
“Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have
given you a full hearing—
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting some-
what less instead”—

I had borne it! — but that “Bertram!” — why it
lies there on the paper
A mere word, without her accent, — and you
cannot judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion! I
seemed drowning in a vapor, —
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her
scorn made desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that in-
ward flow of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into
forms of abstract truth,
With a logic agonizing through unseemly demon-
stration,
And with youth's own anguish turning grimly
gray the hairs of youth, —

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even
I spake wisely
I spake basely — using truth, — if what I spake
indeed was true —
To avenge wrong on a woman — *her*, who sat
there weighing nicely
A full manhood's worth, found guilty of such
deeds as I could do! —

With such wrong and woe exhausted — what I
suffered and occasioned, —
As a wild horse through a city runs with light-
ning in his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive
wall, impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and
blindly drops and dies —



'Twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her like a stone.

So I fell, struck down before her! Do you
blame me friend, for weakness?

'Twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell
before her like a stone;

Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its
roaring wheels of blackness!

When the light came I was lying in this
chamber—and alone.

O, of course, she charged her lackeys to bear
out the sickly burden,

And to cast it from her scornful sight—but
not *beyond* the gate—

She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty
not to pardon

Such a man as I—'twere something to be level
to her hate.

But for *me* you are now conscious why, my
friend, I write this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and the charm
of life undone!
I shall leave her house at dawn — I would to-
night, if I were better —
And I charge my soul to hold my body strength-
ened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart with
no last gazes,
No weak moanings — one word only left in
writing for her hands,
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing
praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far
and foreign lands.

Blame me not. I would not squander life in
grief—I am abstemious:

I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may
soar again:

There's no room for tears of weakness in the
blind eyes of a Phemius:

Into work the poet kneads them,—and he does
not die *till then*.





CONCLUSION.

BERTRAM finished the last pages, while along the
silence ever

Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell the tears on
every leaf:

Having ended, he leans backward in his chair,
with lips that quiver

From the deep unspoken, aye, and deep unwritten
thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a dream
—a dream of mercies!

'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she
standeth still and pale!

'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his
self-curses —

Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing
of his wail.

“Eyes,” he said, “now throbbing through me!
are ye eyes that did undo me?”

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian
statue-stone!

Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye
ever burning torrid

O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and
life undone?”



Said he, — "Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there steady!"

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air
the purple curtain

Swellevh in and swelleth out around her motion-
less pale brows;

While the gliding of the river sends a rippling
noise forever

Through the open casement whitened by the
moonlight's slant repose.

Said he, — "Vision of a lady! stand there silent,
stand there steady!

Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I cannot hope
or doubt —

There, the brows of mild repression — there, the
lips of silent passion,

Curv'd like an archer's bow to send the bitter
arrows out."

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she
kept smiling,

And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding
measured pace ;

With her two white hands extended, as if praying
one offended,

And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in
his face.

Said he, — “Wake me by no gesture, — sound
of breath, or stir of vesture ;

Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its
divine !

No approaching — hush ! no breathing ! or my
heart must swoon to death in

That too utter life thou bringest — O thou dream
of Geraldine !”

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she
 kept smiling —

But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes,
 and tenderly ;

“Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no
 woman far above me

Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such
 a one as *I*?”

Said he, — “I would dream so ever, like the
 flowing of that river,

Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to
 the sea ;

So, thou vision of all sweetness — princely to a
 full completeness, —

Would my heart and life flow onward — death-
 ward — through this dream of *THEE* !”



Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she
 kept smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down the
 blushing of her cheeks;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his,
 she softly told him,
“Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis
 the vision only speaks.”

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee
he fell before her —

And she whispered low in triumph — “It shall
be as I have sworn!

Very rich he is in virtues, — very noble — noble,
certes;

And I shall not blush in knowing that men
call him lowly born!”







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